

1133 Main Street

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To: Alex Elvin <elvin@mvccommission.org>; Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvccommission.org>;

Dear Lucy Morrison; dear Alex Elvin,

As the deliberations about the ultimate fate of Soundside in West Chop march forward, poetry may not be top of mind for you, for the Commissioners, or for the owners of the house, Susannah and Brian Bristol.

But for this admirer of both the Bristol family and the MVC it is. As soon as the sad but not unexpected news reached me, these lines from *Four Quartets*, by British American writer T.S.Eliot came to mind.

"Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored
Or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a bypass..."

All who know the Bristol family fully understand that this fraught decision has in no manner been arrived at in haste. It goes without saying that Soundside is an island icon, calling to mind a gracious age we won't see again. The Bristol family, West Chop, and their lovely house are inextricably connected.

As a friend for more than forty years, I have nothing but respect for the Bristols and I revere their house. My family and I been guests there many times at weddings, birthdays, family parties, charades and just to visit. In thinking about the Vineyard today, there is nothing sadder than the image of that repository of memory vanishing from the bluff.

But when a treasured icon is a very old house resting on very old piers and when it's a code-free, mold heavy, worm-gnawed structure, the maintenance of a safe environment presents a serious if not impossible challenge. Since its owners intend to live year-round in their house, sentiment for the past cannot outweigh the safety and liability factors this beloved and aged grand dame exhibits on a daily basis. To continue with Eliot's lines from 'East Coker',

"Houses live and die: there is a time for building
And a time for living and for generation.
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
And to shake the wainscot where the field mouse trots..."

For over a hundred years history and love have intersected in Soundside. That will continue. The responsible step to take is the one the Bristols have proposed, a safer, recreated structure rising from a new foundation where the disintegrating old one stood. The intention of this project is not to disown the past but to move history forward into the present, opening for future generations Soundside's next chapter.

Eliot's poem ends with this line:
"In my end is my beginning."

Exactly!

Sincerely,

Eleanor Hubbard